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How the Salaf were in Ramadhan

By Shaikh

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May Allah preserve him

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Question: What would be the condition of the Pious Predecessors (Salaf) during the month of Ramadān?

Answer: The noble scholar, Shaikh Rabī' Al-Madkhalī (may Allāh preserve him) said:

In response to this question, I say: It is well-known that the noble Messenger ﷺ would fast most of the month of Sha'bān in preparation for the month of Ramadān as occurs in the narration of 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that, «he would fast all of the month of Sha'bān or, he would fast the whole month leaving only a few days.» Then he would fast this noble month [of Ramadān] and he would single out the last ten days of the month with a more intense attention [to worship]. So during the last ten days, he would exert himself and tighten his waist sheet (i.e. busy himself with worship and stay away from marital relations) and he would perform the i'tikāf (i.e. seclude himself in the Mosque for worship) – his wives and Companions would do likewise. They would establish these mighty deeds of fasting correctly, righteous actions, giving generously and being charitable. The Messenger ﷺ was the most generous of the people and when Ramadān would arrive he would be more generous than a flowing breeze [on a hot day], and especially so when the angel Jibrīl (S) would visit him as occurs in the narration of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Allāh's Messenger ﷺ would recite the Qur'ān to Jibrīl عليه السلام once every Ramadān and in the last year of his life he recited it to him twice in this month as occurs in the narration of 'Ā'ishah and Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه – and this was a sign of his approaching death ﷺ.

The point being that the Pious Predecessors (the Salaf) would pay special attention to this tremendous month by exerting themselves in the recitation of the Qur'ān, plentiful remembrance (dhikr) and striving to refrain from acts of disobedience because fasting requires all of that. Fasting is not merely to refrain from eating and drinking – rather it is to refrain from all those affairs that Allāh ﷻ hates such as sins and so on. So they would strive in the obedience of Allāh ﷻ and they (M) would be sincere to Allāh in this deed [of fasting].

It has been narrated from Imām Mālik (died 179H V) that he would teach the people but when the month of Ramadān would arrive he would devote his time to fasting and the recital of the Qur'ān. So give importance to the recitation of the Qur'ān in this month alongside pondering and reflecting over it, taking its admonitions, refraining from its prohibitions, understanding the permissible affairs and those that are forbidden, understanding the threats of punishment and the promises of reward. With the Qur'ān the souls are purified and the hearts illuminated – it is life, light and guidance just as Allāh ﷻ has described it:

"And thus we have sent to you O Prophet, an inspiration, and a mercy from our command. You knew not what is the Book, nor what is faith? But we have made this Qur'ān a light with which we guide whosoever of our slaves we will. And verily, you O Prophet, are indeed guiding mankind to the Straight Path." (Ash-Shūrah 42:52)

Read about the striving of the Pious Predecessors, their patience, their sincerity to Allāh and their exerting themselves in this noble month and in the other months. We should not remember to be righteous in the month of Ramadān and then forget and leave off obedience during the other months. Rather, we must proceed and be continuous upon the worship of Allāh and in the night prayer and striving in the rest of the affairs of obedience by which we seek nearness to Allāh in Ramadān – so we must not forget. Some people strive during the month of Ramadān in obedience and when it comes to an end they fall short, become lazy and forget many of the acts of obedience. No! No doubt we must give this month its importance more than the other months, however throughout the year and throughout one's life, one is obligated to be mindful of Allāh, remembering Him always: "O you who believe! Remember Allāh with much remembrance – and glorify His praises morning and afternoon." (Al-Ahzāb 33:41-42) So the believer always remembers Allāh ﷻ, obeys Him, fears Him and is aware that Allāh is watching him – and this remains with him throughout every hour of his life. I ask Allāh that He grants us and you success in performing the night prayer, the fasting, and in establishing the obligations in this noble month and to desire its virtues. Likewise, we ask Allāh to grant us success continually in establishing obedience to Him and in striving in that which pleases Him – indeed our Lord hears the supplications.